

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 050910Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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HQ US CUSTOMS SERVICE WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 1711

CUSTOMS FOR FLETCHER POTTER, IOD; VIENNA FOR WALTZ; ROME FOR CUSTOMS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BU
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL TRAINING:
CCINC TRAINING COURSE, BULGARIA

REF: A. CUSTOMS 305
B. SOFIA 706

1. BULGARIAN CUSTOMS NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION DIVISION CHIEF
TEODOR TSVETKOV INFORMED EMBASSY AUG 4 THAT BULGARIA WOULD
BE UNABLE TO HOST ANNUAL US CUSTOMS CCINC TRAINING COURSE,
USUALLY HELD IN VARNA, THIS YEAR. BULGARIANS WISHED, HOWEVER,
TO SCHEDULE FIRMLY NEXT COURSE FOR JUNE 1978.

2. TSVETKOV EXPRESSED HIS DEEP REGRET, STRESSING GREAT
IMPORTANCE WHICH GOB AT POLICY LEVEL, BULGARIAN CUSTOMS CHIEF
LAZAR BONEV, AND HE HIMSELF ATTACH TO US CUSTOMS TRAINING COURSE.
PRINCIPAL REASON FOR BULGARIA'S INABILITY TO HOST COURSE THIS
YEAR IS RECENT ADDITION OF 100 NEW INSPECTORS TO CUSTOMS SERVICE,
AN INCREASE OF STRENGTH OF INSPECTORS OF 20 PERCENT AND
16 PERCENT INCREASE IN TOTAL CUSTOMS PERSONNEL (IN FACE OF
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OVERALL 25-30 PERCENT GOB RIF.) NEW INSPECTORS HAVE NOT YET
HAD EVEN BASIC TRAINING AND BULGARIAN CUSTOMS CONSIDERS IT
WASTE OF RESOURCES TO GIVE THEM SPECIALIZED NARCOTICS TRAINING
BEFORE TEACHING THEM BASIC CUSTOMS SKILLS. IN ADDITION,
TSVETKOV HIMSELF, AN INDISPENSABLE FORCE IN ACHIEVING
HIGH LEVEL OF SUCCESS OF PREVIOUS COURSES, PLANS TO BE IN
GENEVA FOR STUDY PROGRAM MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER.

TSVETKOV EXPRESSED STRONG WISH THAT NECESSITY OF MISSING A YEAR NOT BE MISINTERPRETED BY US AS LESSENING OF BULGARIAN INTEREST IN BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH US IN FIELD OF NARCOTICS INTERDICTION. GOB CONTINUES TO BE HIGHLY SATISFIED WITH PREVIOUS CUSTOMS CCINC TRAINING AND OVERALL PROGRAM. HE CALLED ATTENTION TO RECENT PRESS INTERVIEW WITH BULGARIAN CUSTOMS DIRECTOR BONEV (REF B) IN WHICH BONEV STATED: "IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, WE HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE US CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION, HAVE HELD JOING COURSES AND EXCHANGED EXPERIENCE. THE MUTUAL USEFULNESS OF OUR TIES IS OBVIOUS." (EMBASSY POUCHING ARTICLE TO ADDRESSEES, AT TSVETKOV'S REQUEST.)

3. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT, ALTHOUGH WE TOO REGRETTED BULGARIA'S INABILITY TO HOST CCINC TRAINING COURSE THIS YEAR, WE FULLY UNDERSTOOD BULGARIA CUSTOMS' TRAINING PRIORITES AND LOOKED FORWARD TO FUTURE COOPERATION IN TRAINING AND IN OTHER FIELDS, INCLUDING CCINC TRAINING AT VARNA IN JUNE 1978.

4. REQUEST US CUSTOMS CONFIRMATION THAT THIS STATEMENT OF OUR POSITION ON FUTURE CCINC TRAINING IN BULGARIA IS CORRECT.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT TSVETKOV'S EXPLANATION OF BULGARIA'S INABILITY TO HOST CCINC TRAINING THIS YEAR IS ENTIRELY HONEST AND CANDID. TRAFFIC ACROSS BULGARIA DOES CONTINUE TO INCREASE STEADILY (E.G. 409,000 TRUCKS TRANSITTED BULGARIA IN 1976.) AS DO BULGARIA'S SEIZURES OF NARCOTICS.
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BULGARIAN CUSTOMS' PROBLEMS ARE REAL AND COOPERATION WITH BULGARIA IN THIS FIELD CONTINUES TO BE HIGH US PRIORITY IN INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS FIELD AS WELL AS IN US/BULGARIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS.

6. EMBASSY THUS RECOMMENDS IN STRONGEST TERMS THAT WE STAY WITH THEM IN THIS REGARD AND THAT CCINC TRAINING IN BULGARIA BE PROGRAMMED FOR JUNE 1978. IN ADDITION, CUSTOMS AND DEA MAY WISH TO CONSIDER POSSIBILITY OF OFFERING BULGARIANS OTHER, OUT-OF-COUNTRY TRAINING FOR SMALL NUMBER OF CUSTOMS OFFICIALS BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE 1978 AS SUBSTITUTE. (IT IS NECESSARY, OF COURSE, TO BEAR IN MIND PROBLEM OF LIMITED NUMBER OF BULGARIAN CUSTOMS PERSONNEL SPEAKING LANGUAGES OTHER THAN BULGARIAN IN PROPOSING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.)

7. TSVETKOV ALSO INQUIRED AS TO WHETHER REPLACEMENT HAD YET BEEN NAMED FOR RESIGNED CUSTOMS COMMISSIONER ACREE. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT WHEN NEW COMMISSIONER IS NAMED, HE WRITE TO BONEV TO ESTABLISH IN PERSONAL TERMS CLEAR US INTEREST IN CONTINUING FRUITFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH BULGARIA.
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